

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 PORT A 00776 042133Z  
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 AID-05  
PA-01 PRS-01 IGA-02 EB-08 /037 W  
-----051227 028901 /23-12  
R 042158Z MAR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4227  
USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT AU PRINCE 0776

EO 11652 GDS  
TAGS: SHUM, SOPN, HA  
SUBJECT: TEMPORARY ARREST OF REPORTER AND INTERROGATION OF PUBLISHER

1. DIEUDONNE FARDIN, EDITOR OF OUTSPOKEN INTELLECTUAL WEEKLY LE PETIT SAMEDI SOIR (PSS), WAS DETAINED AND TAKEN TO THE CASERNES DESSALINES FOR FOUR HOURS OF INTERROGATION ON OR ABOUT FEBRUARY 28, ACCORDING TO A RELIABLE SOURCE. THIS INCIDENT FOLLOWED DISTRIBUTION THE PREVIOUS WEEKEND OF THE FEBRUARY 26-MARCH 3 EDITION OF PSS IN WHICH FARDIN VOCIFEROUSLY PROTESTED THE FEBRUARY 10 DETENTION AND INTERROGATION OF PSS AND RADIO METROPOLE REPORTER JULES NICOLAS.

2. ACCORDING TO PSS, AT 4:30 THAT AFTERNOON NICOLAS WAS OBSERVING THE "ANIMATED" SALE OF EMERGENCY SACKS OF RICE "UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF A MINISTRY OF COMMERCE INSPECTOR." THE ARTICLE CLAIMED THAT THE INSPECTOR DEMANDED TO KNOW WHAT NICOLAS WAS DOING THERE, AND WHEN HE IDENTIFIED HIMSELF AS A PSS REPORTER, PROCEEDED TO ORDER HIS ARREST AND THE CONFISCATION OF HIS WALLET, I.D., TAPE RECORDER AND OTHER PERSONAL PROPERTY. ONLY AFTER A THREE-HOUR WAIT, HE WAS INTERROGATED AND FINALLY RELEASED AT 10:30 P.M. EXPLAINING THAT PSS IS PREPARING A REPORT ON THE RICE SHORTAGE, FARDIN THEN WROTE THAT THE ARREST OF HIS REPORTER WAS IN TOTAL DISREGARD OF THE HAITIAN CONSTITUTION AND ASKED FOR WHOM THE INSPECTOR WORKED.  
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HE SAID THE WEEKLY WAS UNABLE TO FIND ANYONE WHO COULD IDENTIFY THIS "ANONYMOUS" OFFICIAL.

3. THE REST OF THE LENGTHY ARTICLE WAS DEVOTED TO A DEFENSE OF THE RIGHT OF JOURNALISTIC INQUIRY, AND CONCLUDED: "LIBERTY IS FRAGILE. ITS PROTECTION SHOULD BE A DAILY CONCERN. TO SACRIFICE IT, EVEN FOR ONE PASSING TIME, IS TO BETRAY IT, ABOVE

ALL IN A COUNTRY AS OURS WHICH HAS A LONG TRADITION OF ANARCHY. THERE WAS A TIME WHEN IN PORT AU PRINCE NEIGHBORHOOD PRISONS ABOUNDED. THE COURTS DIDN'T OPERATE. ARRESTS WERE ARBITRARY, TRIALS WERE RENDERED SPECTACLES BY CITIZENS WITHOUT TITLES OR QUALIFICATIONS. THAT WAS THE PERIOD WHEN TI BOBO SPREAD TERROR IN 'BOTH ENTRANCES TO THE CAPITAL' (TI BOBO WAS A TONTON MACOUTE WHO IS SAID TO HAVE CONTROLLED ACCESS TO THE CAPITAL FROM THE WEST AND TO THE NORTH)."

4. COMMENT: THIS ARBITRARY ARREST OF A REPORTER AND THE SUBSEQUENT INTERROGATION OF HIS PUBLISHER ARE THE FIRST SUCH INCIDENTS INVOLVING THE PRESS SINCE JEUNE PRESSE CO-EDITORS LUC AND BOB NEREE WERE CALLED IN, QUESTIONED AND RELEASED AT CASERNES DESALINES IN LATE JANUARY (PORT AU PRINCE 0429; PAO MEMCON FEBRUARY 2, 1977). RICE DISTRIBUTION IS SENSITIVE ISSUE INVOLVING CHARGES OF HOARDING AND PROFITEERING BY THE POLITICALLY POWERFUL. IF FARDIN AND LIKE-MINDED PROGRESSIVE JOURNALISTS PERSIST IN THEIR INVESTIGATIONS AND DENUNCIATIONS, GOVERNMENT MAY TAKE STRONGER PUNITIVE MEASURES WHICH IN TURN COULD NOT FAIL TO OFFSET GENERALLY FAVORABLE IMPACT OF RECENT PRISONER RELEASES. WE WILL MAKE THIS POINT IN APPROPRIATE QUARTERS.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
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